

§ 53.1

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AUTHORITY: 38 U.S.C. 101, 501, 1744.

SOURCE: 73 FR 73560, Dec. 3, 2008, unless otherwise noted.

§ 53.1 Purpose and scope.

In accordance with the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 1744, this part sets forth the mechanism for a State to obtain payments to assist a State Veterans Home (SVH) in the hiring and retention of nurses for the purpose of reducing nursing shortages at that SVH.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 101, 501, 1744)

§ 53.2 Definitions.

For the purpose of this part:

Nurse means an individual who is a registered nurse, a licensed practical nurse, a licensed vocational nurse, or a nursing assistant certified in the State in which payment is made and who is a bedside caregiver at least a majority of the time (e.g., this would generally not include an individual acting in the capacity of an advance practice nurse, an administrative nurse, or a director of nursing) (the terms *nurses* and *nursing* shall be construed consistent with this definition).

State means each of the several States, Territories, and possessions of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

State representative means the official designated in accordance with State authority with responsibility for matters relating to payments under this part.

State Veterans Home (SVH) means a home approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) which a State established primarily for veterans disabled by age, disease, or otherwise, who by reason of such disability are incapable of earning a living. A SVH may provide domiciliary care, nursing home care, adult day health care, and hospital care. Hospital care may be pro-

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vided only when the SVH also provides domiciliary and/or nursing home care.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 101, 501, 1744)

§ 53.10 Decision makers, notifications, and additional information.

The Chief Consultant, Geriatrics and Extended Care, will make all determinations regarding payments under this part, and will provide written notice to affected State representatives of approvals, denials, or requests for additional information under this part.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 101, 501, 1744)

§ 53.11 General requirements for payments.

(a) VA will make payment under this part to a State for an employee incentive program to reduce the shortage of nurses at the SVH, when the following conditions are met:

(1) The State representative applies for payment in accordance with the provisions of § 53.20;

(2) The SVH receives per diem payments from VA under the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 1741 for one or more of the following: Adult day health care, domiciliary care, hospital care, or nursing home care;

(3) The SVH has a nursing shortage that is documented by credible evidence, including but not limited to SVH records showing nursing vacancies, SVH records showing nurse overtime use, and reports documenting that nurses are difficult to hire in the local area and difficult to retain as employees at the SVH;

(4) The SVH does not use payments under this part to pay for all or part of a nurse's standard employee benefits, such as salary, health insurance, or retirement plan;

(5) The SVH provides to the Chief Consultant, Geriatrics and Extended Care, documentation establishing that it has an employee incentive program that:

(i) Is likely to be effective in promoting the hiring and retention of nurses for the purpose of reducing nursing shortages at that home, and

(ii) Is in operation or ready for immediate implementation if VA payments are made under this part;

(6) The payment amount applied for by the State is no more than 50 percent of the funding for the employee incentive program during the Federal fiscal year;

(7) The SVH employee incentive program includes a mechanism to ensure that an individual receiving benefits under the program works at the SVH as a nurse for a period commensurate with the benefits provided, and, insofar as possible, the program is designed to eliminate any nursing shortage at the SVH within a 3-year period from the initiation of VA payments;

(8) The SVH, if it received payments under this part during a previous Federal fiscal year, has met the reporting requirements of § 53.31(a) regarding such payments;

(9) The SVH credits to its employee incentive program any funds refunded to the SVH by an employee because the employee was in breach of an agreement for employee assistance funded with payments made under this part and the SVH credits the amount returned as a non-Federal funding source; and

(10) The project does not involve the construction, acquisition, expansion, remodeling or alteration of the SVH.

(b) VA intends to allow flexibility and innovation in determining the types of employee incentive programs at SVHs eligible for payments. Programs could include such things as the provision of short-term scholarships for continuing nursing education, sign-on bonuses for nurses, student loan forgiveness programs, and improvements to working conditions. In determining whether an employee incentive program is likely to be effective, VA will consider any information available, including past performance of the SVH's program funded by payments made under this part.

(Authority: 38 U.S.C. 101, 501, 1744)

(The Office of Management and Budget has approved the information collection provisions in this section under control number 2900-0709)

§ 53.20 Application requirements.

(a) To apply for payments during a Federal fiscal year, a State representative must submit to VA, in accordance with § 53.40, a completed VA Form 10-

0430 and documentation specified by the form (VA Form 10-0430 is available at VA medical centers and on the Internet at <http://www1.va.gov/geriatricsshg/> or may be obtained by contacting the Geriatrics and Extended Care Office (114) at 202-461-6750, VHA Headquarters, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420). The submission for payments for a fiscal year must be received by VA during the last quarter (July 1-September 30) of the preceding fiscal year. The State must submit a new application for each fiscal year that the State seeks payments for an incentive program.

(b) As part of the application, the State representative must submit to VA evidence that the State has sufficient funding, when combined with the VA payments, to fully operate its employee incentive program through the end of the fiscal year. To meet this requirement, the State representative must provide to VA a letter from an authorized State official certifying that, if VA were to approve payments under this part, the non-VA share of the funds for the program would be by a date or dates specified in the certification, available for the employee incentive program without further State action to make such funds available. If the certification is based on a State law authorizing funds for the employee incentive program, a copy of the State law must be submitted with the certification.

(c) If an application does not contain sufficient information for a determination under this part, the State representative will be notified in writing (electronically and by mail) of any additional submission required and that the State has 30 calendar days from the date of the notice to submit such additional information or no further action will be taken. If the State representative does not submit all of the required information or demonstrate that he or she has good cause for failing to provide the information within 30 calendar days of the notice (which may extend beyond the last quarter of the preceding Federal fiscal year), then the